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29 December 1967


MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. John Warner, Legislative Counsel

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Information on Vietnam

1. Attached are papers providing data requested by Congressman Bayh on infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam, US strength in Vietnam, and biographic material on senior Communist military leaders in South Vietnam.

2. General Thai has commanded enemy forces in Region V (South-Central Vietnam) since early 1965. Several sources have reported that he succeeded the late General Nguyen Chi Thanh as overall commander at the Central Headquarters for South Vietnam (COSVN). Other sources have named General Dung as General Thanh's successor; we have not confirmed either of these series of reports. General Don commanded the Viet Cong Region V before General Thai's arrival and has since been his deputy. General Tra (who also uses the alias of Tran Nam Trung) was the overall commander in the south before General Thanh's arrival in 1965 and is still listed publicly by the Front as commander of the Liberation Armed Forces. We believe he has been relegated to a secondary position (such as Chief of Staff) in the same way as was General Don. Both Don and Tra had regrouped to the north after the 1954 armistice and returned south in the early 1960's.

3. We stand ready to provide any further information required.


for George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachments

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1. Infiltration. Significant infiltration of military personnel from North Vietnam to South Vietnam began in 1959; before that year, infiltration was on a small-scale and limited largely to movements of political cadre and agents. Annual figures for infiltration since 1959 (including both confirmed and probable categories, but omitting possibles) are as follows:

1959-1960	4,600
1961	6,300
1962	12,800
1963	7,900
1964	12,400
1965	26,000
1966	55,300
1967	30,000*

2. Before 1964, the infiltrated elements comprised largely southerners who had been regrouped to the north after the 1954 armistice. These men had been integrated into the North Vietnamese Army, and most had received advanced military and political training during the years preceding their dispatch back to the south. They were sent back south in accordance with a systematic program, begun in late 1959, to accelerate the development of Viet Cong military capabilities. Most of the regrouped southerners were used to provide experienced and well-trained military cadres for the Viet Cong main force and local force units which were formed beginning in late 1960. Others provided command and staff personnel for the headquarters and support elements created at the Central Office (COSVN), Regional, Provincial and District levels which were developed between 1961 and 1962. Still others were used as technical cadre for specialized units -- engineers, anti-aircraft, transportation, and medical -- created progressively after 1962.

*Confirmation of infiltrating groups usually lags an average of six months behind their actual movement; thus the figures for 1967 are still incomplete for the last six months. Judging from past experience, the total for 1967 may run as much as 50 percent higher than the number confirmed thus far this year.

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3. Beginning in late 1964, the pattern of infiltration shifted, and the flow of regrouped southern cadre was replaced by the movement of ethnic northerners formed into complete combat units. Since then, only a handful of southerners have been confirmed in infiltration groups, and the enemy's main force military structure has gradually taken on a predominantly northern complexion. Almost half of the enemy's 151 infantry-type battalions currently in the south originated in North Vietnam and are composed of ethnic northerners. Other northern regulars have been integrated as replacements into southern Viet Cong main force -- and even local force -- units. The influx of northern combat units was accompanied in early 1965 by the infiltration of senior North Vietnamese Army officers to further strengthen the command echelons of the enemy's forces. Generals Hoang Van Thai and Nguyen Chi Thanh (the latter since killed) arrived in the south in early 1965 to take command of regional and national headquarters; other lesser cadre were used to create new "Front" headquarters needed to control the larger-scale tactical groupings made possible by the introduction of North Vietnamese Army units.

4. U.S. Strength. The strength of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in 1954 was 342 officers and men. This number was increased to about 1,000 between 1955 and 1961 as it took on training responsibilities for the Vietnamese Armed Forces following the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps. In late 1961, after General Taylor's mission, the U.S. began augmenting its advisory elements and introducing support elements to assist the Vietnamese Armed Forces to counter the expanding Viet Cong military threat. U.S. military strength increased to over 10,000 by the end of 1962, and to about 25,000 in 1964. (The Department of Defense can provide precise figures.) With the influx of North Vietnamese Army regular units in late 1964, it became evident that Vietnamese Government combat capabilities were inadequate to the challenge. Consequently, early in March 1965, the first U.S. ground combat units were introduced to cope with the enemy's increased military potential.

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The attached material was prepared in follow-up of a briefing given to Senator Birch Bayh on 19 December 1967 by Messrs. George Carver and John Warner for the Senator's upcoming trip to Vietnam.